Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology
Mobile Device Pilot Project Proposal
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Introduction

Mobile devices have already shaped the way in which the general population, from the classroom to the living room, access information today. In order to understand where mobile devices will fit into the North Carolina General Assembly's business process the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology proposes to conduct a pilot project, proof of concept, in the use of mobile devices. The project will seek to determine how mobile devices might improve overall productivity, reduce the use of paper and print services, and provide for a more effective and efficient approach by which members and staff perform their day-to-day-legislative duties.

As with the first implementation of IT in the legislature, mobile devices may be an evolutionary or even a revolutionary move that could change how the legislative business process is done within the General Assembly. Mobile devices are in use in our environment today, so the question is not whether mobile devices will be used in the business process; it is when will they be used and where they will offer the most worth to the business process for the value of the technology. The devices present all the inherent issues that early personal computers and laptops presented when the shift was made from mainframe technology to client-server technology. Hardware and software have evolved to meet the needs of the business process that were being met with the old technology, but during the development of new hardware and software, features have been introduced that improve the overall business process. This will hold true as improvements continue to be made in mobile device technology. For this reason, our challenge lies in exploring, identifying and seeking to procure devices and systems that will afford the General Assembly the greatest modification flexibility as improvements are made and the marketplace for these revolutionary devices continues to evolve and bring forward new capabilities.

Project Scope

The project may encompass a review of all potential mobile devices in order to evaluate the practical use of the device as well as its limitations. The devices will be deployed to the sixteen members of the committee as well as the committee staff. The committee site will be modified to allow easy access for members as well as the public to view documents and presentations offered to the committee. Consideration must be given to provide for the use of a NCGA public WiFi network to allow for participation by members of the public who do not have the use of a cellular connection. ISD is confident that our existing infrastructure and capabilities can facilitate this need. In addition, acquisition of additional software that may not be native to the device may be necessary in order to allow for NCGA remote access, and to enable users to view certain types of information or access external sites for use. This need will be assessed during ISD's formatting of devices.

This "controlled" environment will allow for collection of the necessary evaluation criteria needed to support a meaningful report on the outcome of the project. The findings in the report will allow for input concerning the chamber automation project and the consideration of expansion of these mobile technologies to other legislative committees. Lastly, the report should provide the essential information required to enable the Joint Legislative Leadership to make a determination as to how mobile devices might be used to improve the legislative business process.

Legal Issues

The primary purpose of any legislative committee is to develop, or review, proposals for new or amended laws. Ultimately, law involves the analysis and management of information. Historically, law has been in written form. Nevertheless, the ever-advancing information technology innovations

of the Digital Age present the legislature with the opportunity to make law with all the advantages and efficiencies that technology offers. In North Carolina, bills and enacted legislation are already disseminated and accessed electronically. The pilot will allow the committee process to be a paperless process. The law is often presumed to be written on paper, however, it does not necessarily require paper. The paperless committee pilot will provide a review of when paper is required in the legislative committee process versus when it is preferred by tradition. This information is an important component of determining why, when, and how to convert to a paperless process in other legislative committees as well.

In general, the main legal issues presented by a paperless legislative committee process can be broken into four categories:

(1) Availability: Will important information be collected, retained, and accessible when needed? How long should the information be kept given legal record-keeping needs?

(2) Legal Sufficiency: Certain types of transactions must be in "writing" and "signed" in order to be legally enforceable. The law is still developing with respect to whether such requirements will be satisfied by all electronic processes in all circumstances.

(3) Reliability: Will electronic records be sufficiently reliable and persuasive to satisfy other legislators, the public, the courts, and stakeholders (lobbyists, agency officials, interest groups, etc.) who must determine the facts underlying the committee's actions? Will the electronic records be maintained in such a way to satisfy admissibility requirements? Will sufficient context be preserved so that the electronic records are usable?

(4) Compliance With Other Laws: Will the use of paperless methods to obtain, send, disclose, and store information comply with applicable laws, such as those governing open meetings, privacy, confidentiality, recordkeeping, and accessibility to persons with disabilities?

Evaluation Criteria and Outcomes

As with any hardware or software that is under consideration, ISD will conduct a best practice approach in its evaluation process. Following is a list of the evaluation criteria. As the project progresses, more criteria may be added in order to provide the most comprehensive assessment possible.

1. Does the device have the necessary functionality and flexibility; i.e., is the device "ready for prime time;"
    a. Overall device features and device limitations:
        i. The uses of these devices are relatively new to public and private sector business, are we going to be the early adopters of the technology.
        ii. The hardware and software are ever improving, and the technology advancements mimic the early phases of the PC and laptop platforms, what can these advancements offer to overcome the limitations discovered.
2. Costs
    a. Device costs.
    b. Associated software costs.
    c. Training costs, if any.

3. Software requirements
4. Explore the "bring your own device" option:
    a. Pros/cons.
5. Compatibility with current and future NCGA software:
    a. In-house developed.
    b. Purchased products.
    c. Future (short- and long-range) access to, and readability of, records created.
6. Use of device for the viewing of committee documents:
    a. Meeting agendas.
    b. Presentations.
    c. Legislation and its development:
        i. Bills.
        ii. Amendments.
        iii. Committee substitutes.
        iv. Committee reports.
        v. Fiscal notes.
    d. Document sharing and collaboration between members and staff
7. Use of device for:
    a. Video/audio.
    b. Webinars.
    c. Member-related cost-saving generated by alternative for "go-to-meeting" usage:
        i. Assess potential savings in the area of:
            1. Travel reimbursement.
            2. Extra-day/overnight per diem.
8. Cost/benefit analysis of potential savings, whether quantifiable or unquantifiable, direct or indirect; including, but not limited to: paper and printer services costs reductions.
9. Ease of use by members and staff for increased efficiency.
10. Reliability.
11. Application and device security; including analysis to determine the level of protection needed and the level of risk that can be tolerated in the legislative committee environment.
    a. Encryption.
    b. Password protect device.
    c. Virus protection requirements.
12. Network Interface.
    a. Speed – download/upload.
    b. NCGA wire/wireless.
    c. Cellular.
    d. Voice/Video and Data.
13. Data Storage impact.
14. Requirements of staff, the committee clerk, and presenters in order to provide a true digital experience.
15. Configuration requirements.
16. How the device fits within the following areas:
    a. IT device refresh rate.
    b. Software update requirements.

17. Requirements for a mobile device management solution.
18. Training in use of device for members and staff.
19. Use of social media sites and other web-based tools as a catalyst for constituent casework, interaction and communications.
20. Assist in development of a template for converting a traditional legislative committee process to an electronic one, especially if converting means re-engineering the existing process.
21. Transparency; public access capabilities and limitations.

Conclusion

While we cannot predict when the next i-Pad, Android tablet, or new and improved mobile devices will emerge, the legislature can better position itself to evaluate and meet the needs of the members and citizens presently and in the years to come, by laying a foundation to meet those needs as new technology is introduced.

Moreover, the landscape of the legislative work environment has already begun to change because of mobile devices. Both the workday and workweek have expanded. The flexibility currently afforded by laptops and smartphones means that legislators and staff can be more productive than they would be behind a desk from eight to five. With e-mail at the fingertip, for example, responses are made when the traditional workday has ended and even when vacation is taken. For legislators, whether commuting between the State capital and home districts, speaking with constituents at county fairs and town hall meetings, or walking between meetings within the legislative complex, more advanced mobile devices will allow this mobilized business process to mature. For staff, better tools translates into greater efficiency and better service to legislators, agencies, stakeholders and the general public. The paperless committee pilot will test practices, protocols and policies toward advancing the legislative process in North Carolina.

The results of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology's mobile device pilot project should provide a technology road map where the traditional legislative business process is prepared to meet the needs of a mobilized legislative business process. Thus, this road map will start the General Assembly on a path towards a new era of hardware and software technology development that will assist in laying this new technology foundation.